

[By Bob Kinzel](#)

According to Congressman Peter Welch, the Farm Bill that's just been adopted by the House Agriculture committee contains good news and bad news for Vermont.

By a vote of 29 to 17, the committee supported a plan that allows farmers to purchase a special insurance policy that would reimburse them whenever milk prices dropped below the cost of production.

The proposal also includes a supply management provision to discourage the over-production of milk.

Welch is a member of the House Agriculture committee. He says a coalition of Vermont farmers played a critical role convincing a number of Republican members on the panel that this new plan was a good approach.

"They put out an all points bulletin to their colleagues in some of these targeted districts where members were on the fence and they weighed in," said Welch. "So I think this grass roots effort by Vermont farmers from start to finish working together to come up with a sensible plan, working with colleagues in other parts of the country to advocate to their members of Congress, I think that made a huge difference."

Welch says the bad news for Vermont is that the bill cuts the Food Stamp program by \$16 billion over the next 10 years and his efforts to restore funding weren't successful.

"Whatever reforms we need in any program including Food Stamps we should make," Welch said. But let's not use the constant need we have and obligation to reform things to become the excuse to kill things. Folks need food."

Carlin Finn is the director of Voices for Vermont Children. She says roughly 42,000 Vermonters currently receive benefits in the food program. She estimates that the House legislation will result in a 40 percent cut in benefits for about 10,000 Vermonters. She says the cuts are a shortsighted way to balance the federal budget.

"It's not extra money it's money that's needed so they're going to have to go somewhere else and that means that we're going to see an increase in hunger in one of the richest nations in the world. It's absurd."

The measure is now headed to the House floor for a vote and Rep. Welch says he's getting ready to fight amendments that will propose even larger cuts in the Food Stamp program.